

Fernandez-Tissot House
1400 Moss Street
New Orleans
Orleans Parish
Louisiana

HABS No. LA-1117

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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Eastern Office, Design and Construction
143 South Third Street
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

FERNANDEZ-TISSOT HOUSE

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Address: 1400 Moss Street, New Orleans, Orleans Parish,
Louisiana.

Present Owner
and Occupant: Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart.

Present Use: Convent.

Statement of
Significance: The plan type in the original portion of the house
is typical of the region in the early 19th century.
Major renovations, particularly during the Greek
Revival Period, have obscured most of the original
house.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

Facing Bayou St. John at 1400 Moss Street is an interesting house of obvious antiquity, basically similar to other early houses along the bayou but with some significant differences. Instead of the French colonial type hipped roof, this house has gabled ends in the American manner. Although it probably originally had small turned wooden columns on its second floor gallery, the few old columns that now remain are of the square Greek Revival type, corresponding to the Greek Revival cornice that extends across the front of the house. Other Greek Revival details also appear in the doors and trim, indicating a possible extensive remodeling in the 1850-60's period.

This house, like the adjacent Michel House at 1370 Moss Street, has an interesting and varied history, and like the adjacent property, its titles can be traced to a common origin as part of the plantation of Don Santiago Lorreins, deriving through Rene Huchet de Kernion from Antoine Rivard de la Vigne, among the Bayou's first settlers in 1708.

This property was part of a tract sold by Santiago Bautista Lorreins on August 20, 1800 to Andres Fernandez before the Notary Pedro Pedesclaux. It was one arpent in width facing Bayou St. John and extended back 15 arpents, 6 toises and 4 feet to the boundary of the lands of Don Antonio de St. Maxent on the Bayou closer to the lake. This subdivision of the Lorreins plantation appears on a survey by Carlos Trudeau dated August 5, 1800 and attached to an act of November 20, 1819 in the records of the Notary Marc Lafitte (Vol. 14 f. 343 [368]).

The house was probably first built by Andres Fernandez who had paid 1380 Mexican silver pesos for the property in 1800 and sold it "with the houses and structures of all kinds" in 1819 for \$6000. Fernandez was an official of the Spanish colonial government, attorney-in-fact to Joseph Rudolph Ducros, Depositor General, and in that capacity had

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taken charge of the estate of the late Bertrand Gravier in 1797. His deposition taken in 1807 in connection with the famous batture case appears in the Louisiana Historical Quarterly (Vol. 23 p. 697) and reveals that he had been a resident of New Orleans since about 1782. Sometime between 1807 and 1818 Fernandez left New Orleans to take up his residence in Havana, Cuba, where he was living in 1819 when he sold his Bayou house through an agent. The purchaser was Vallery Robert Avart. The property was then described as being between the properties of Jose Reynes and Bernard Coquet. The act of sale is the one referred to above to which the Trudeau survey is attached.

Avart held the property for a short time, when financial difficulties forced him to surrender his property to his creditors, who had it sold at auction on March 2, 1825. The act of sale to Samuel Kohn was passed before the Notary, Felix de Armas on March 14, 1825. This act described the property as being one arpent in front on the Bayou by 14 or more arpents in depth "bounded on one side by the property of Mr. Albin Michel and on the other by the property of Mr. Pierre L. Morel." On the property was a "house with an upper story, repaired like new, a kitchen, servants' cabins, storehouse, pigeon house, coach house, chicken house and all other buildings, circumstances and dependencies." The sale price was \$4000. On January 2, 1826, Samuel Kohn purchased the adjacent arpent of land from Pierre Louis Morel, but this act of sale was destroyed with the records of the Notary G. R. Stringer.

Samuel Kohn owned this house on the Bayou until 1831 when he sold the first lot with the house to Frederick Frey. This sale was made before Felix de Armas on October 7, 1831 for \$12000. On April 25, 1832, before the same notary, Kohn sold the second lot to Frey and from then until 1849 the two properties were always sold together.

Samuel Kohn had intended to sell his Bayou house for several years, and so advertised it in the Louisiana Courier on March 8, 1828:

At Auction
Pleasant Country Seat

"Situated at the Bayou St. John, that beautiful country seat, the residence of Mr. Samuel Kohn; measuring one acre front by about 16 acres in depth; on which is a large two story HOUSE, well distributed and in excellent repair, newly papered and painted. In the back yard a new building of about 100 feet long, divided into a store-house, kitchen, washing, ironing and servants' rooms, and in the garret a grainery, also a privy, a deep well with a pump, two large water cisterns. In the yard adjoining, a spacious stable with coach-house, pigeon house and shed. The property is under a new fence; a vegetable garden under excellent cultivation; an orchard of about three hundred fruit trees of the choicest qualities from Europe and the States, principally in bearing; fronting the house in a parterre laid out with taste, such as arbour and shrubery (sic) and plants from

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Europe, the West Indies and the States. Fronting on the Bayou a very convenient Bathing House, with a pump and catching tub. The property is luxuriantly shaded by the most stately pecan trees, so situated that the house is continually protected from the rays of the sun. This place is so well known that a further description is unnecessary."

After such a glowing description it is surprising that the house was not sold until three years later, in 1831. Perhaps Mr. Kohn found it too attractive to part with. The new building mentioned as being in the back yard is probably the one still standing there and now used as inadequate classrooms by Cabrini High School.

Frederick Frey, like Vallery Avart some years before, also lost the property to his creditors in 1843 and it was taken over by the Citizens' Bank of Louisiana by act dated February 7, 1843 before Jules Mossy, notary. On April 13, 1843 the Bank sold it to George Urquhart before the notary Charles Boudousquie. Urquhart then sold it before the same notary on June 5, 1846 to Felix Labatut. The next year (February 25, 1847) Labatut sold it to Robert Copland before Lucian Herman, Notary. Labatut was later forced to file suit against Copland in the Second District Court (#2001) and repossessed the property at a sheriff sale on April 20, 1849. (COB 47. p. 490).

Labatut, one of the Church Wardens of St. Louis Cathedral, then sold the property to the Cathedral for the same price of \$15,000, that he had formerly sold it to Copland. This sale took place on June 8, 1849 before J. Cuvllier, notary. This purchase was made for the purpose of establishing a new cemetery, now St. Louis Cemetery No. 3. (Wilson-Huber "The St. Louis Cemeteries of New Orleans" p. 36). The wardens noted in the minutes of their meeting of June 5, 1849 "that mention be made in the act of acquisition that the major part of the land is intended to establish a cemetery, conforming to the agreement between this municipality No. One and the Council of Churchwardens."

Only the land beyond the prolongation of Esplanade Avenue was dedicated to cemetery use and the rest of the property between Esplanade and the Bayou was divided into lots and sold. On June 28, 1852 before the Notary A. J. Guirot (COB 59/8) the Wardens sold lots 5 and 6 to Mrs. Julie Fortin, wife of Clement Ramos. These were the two lots on which the house and outbuildings stood, according to a plan of R. Gualdi dated April 17, 1852, a copy of which is in the Notarial Archives (Plan Book 5, Folio 3). Each lot was 95'-6" wide by about 285' deep.

Mrs. Ramos sold the house and grounds on May 29, 1858 to the widow of Angel Kiques (A. Doriocourt, notary) but she lost it two years later in a law suit filed in the Sixth District Court (#8503) by Norbert Vignie. Robert Davis was the purchaser at the subsequent Sheriff sale (COB 82 f. 397). Davis in turn lost it just after the Civil War and it was again sold by the sheriff this time on December 12, 1866 (COB 91 f. 623) when Aristee Louis Tissot, the noted Judge of the Second District Court and its successor, the Civil District Court, bought it. Judge Tissot's father, Jean Louis Tissot owned

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the house next door (now 1370 Moss Street) and bought this one from his son on July 30, 1870 (G. Bouny, Notary Public). It remained in the Tissot family until 1903 when it was bought by the Columbia Brewing Company (COB 190 f. 396), from whom St. Frances Xavier Cabrini bought it on February 9, 1905 (COB 201 p. 305). It has ever since been the property of the Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart of which Mother Cabrini was Mother General.

This old house was the residence of Judge Tissot at the time of his death. An inventory made by the notary J. F. Meunier on January 20, 1896 lists all the contents of the house including paintings, furniture, etc. Rooms listed were: Dining room, hall, piazza, parlor, three bedrooms and a second-floor hall. The Judge's extensive library was in his law office at 52 Bienville Street.

Prepared by Samuel Wilson, Jr., FALA
New Orleans, Louisiana
Summer 1964.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement

1. Architectural character: The plan type in the original portion of the house is typical of the region in the early 19th century. Major renovations, particularly during the Greek Revival Period, have obscured most of the original house.
2. Condition of fabric: Fair to poor.

B. Detailed Description of Exterior

1. Number of stories, bays, over-all dimensions, layout--shape: Two stories, four-bay front, 41'-10" x 47'-3"; rectangular.
2. Foundations: Probably brick.
3. Wall construction, finish, and color: The first floor is constructed of solid brick masonry which is covered with stucco; the second, of brick between posts is covered with modern horizontal siding on three sides and stucco in the front. The entire structure is painted white.
4. Structural system, framing: Brick bearing walls with wooden joists framing the first and second-floor ceilings. The gable roof is framed with wooden rafters and has a modern wooden sheathing.

5. Porches: Stuccoed brick columns support a wooden frame second-floor porch on front. (Note the proportions of slopes of roof and the sloping second floor in rear which could indicate the former existence of porch along rear of house.)
6. Chimneys: Chimneys on both sides terminate in attic.
7. Openings:
 - a. Doors: There are an elaborate Greek Revival main entrance door and door to upstairs porch. The original double doors had small lights over wooden panels, small glass transoms, and exterior shutters.
 - b. Windows and shutters: There are three triple-hung six-over-six-over-six-light windows on the first-floor front; the remainder are either six-over-six double-hung or four-light casement. All have exterior louvered, wooden shutters.
8. Roof:
 - a. Shape, covering: Gable roof covered with slate.
 - b. Cornice: Large box-like, tripartite cornice across front.
 - c. Dormers: There are two simple wooden dormers on front and two smaller dormers in rear.

C. Detailed Description of Interior

1. Floor plan: Central-hall plan.
2. Stairways: A single-run staircase with 18 risers is located in the central hallway; it has Greek Revival trim.
3. Flooring: Narrow wooden floorboards both upstairs and downstairs.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: Plaster on lath.
5. Doors: Four-panel wooden doors.
6. Decorative trim: First-floor front room has Greek Revival plaster cornice.
7. Lighting: Modern electrical.
8. Heating: Modern gas heaters.

D. Site

1. Orientation and general setting: The house is situated on the Catholic high school campus grounds, and separated from the academic area by a board fence, and from Moss Street by a brick fence. It overlooks Bayou St. John.
2. Landscaping and walks: Landscaping is very simple, not original. Modern concrete walks and covered wooden walkway. Old brick paving in portico.

Prepared by J. H. Bolke, Jr., Architect
New Orleans, Louisiana
Summer 1964.